The New Poor
The Importance of Knowledge

- Financial poverty usually coincides with information poverty
- Information wealth is required for effective functioning in contemporary society
- The mass media can reach large groups in ways never thought possible
- Theoretically knowledge should be available to all via the new technologies
The Hope of the Church

• “The first of these (controversial) issues is information, or the search for news and its publication. There exists in human society a right to information…” (Inter Mirifica, #5)

• “Public opinion exercises enormous influence over the lives of all citizens … It is necessary … justice and charity … in the formation and diffusion of public opinion (Inter Mirifica, #8)
Communio et Progressio

• “The (media) can contribute a great deal to human unity. If … good will is not there … there is less understanding and more discord … evils are multiplied” (#9)

• “All … are to work together … to ensure the media of communication … contribute to the pursuit of truth and the speeding up of progress” (#13)
Aspiration of the State

- DeValera on the opening night of RTÉ “”
The Knowledge Gap

• "as the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socioeconomic status (SES) tend to acquire this information at a faster rate than the lower status segments, so that the gap in knowledge between these segments tends to increase rather than decrease" (Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1965)
Past and Present

- 1940s research on **chronic know-nothings** (Hyman & Sheatsley, 1947).
- Persistent inequities in the acquisition of mass media information (Gaziano, 1983; Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1980)
- Information is not distributed equally, fairly and uniformly throughout, and to all segments of society.
The Role of the Media

- Information gap is predicted by media reliance -- newspapers vs. TV as source
- The lower the SES the more likely the use of TV as a primary source of news
- TV news is less informational than newspapers
- TV coverage of certain events of importance can be nonexistent due to limitations of space and time
The Gap in Current Affairs

- The divorce referendum indicated significant differences in the coverage between TV and newspaper.
- The knowledge gap is wider where there is a plurality of news sources.
- Strong local impact can lessen the gap especially when different audiences are targeted in specific ways.
Brantgarde (1983) indicates the gap refers to more than just knowledge

- knowledge gap does exist
- dissemination gap also exists
- influence comes from dissemination
- influence gap exists
Why does this gap exist?

- Different communication skills between rich and poor
- Different social exposure
- Different media exposure
- Different levels of education
- Different priorities
- The nature of media orientation to the consumer market
Consumption Patterns Change

• Less time for TV viewing and more channels
• Decreasing newspaper readership relative to population growth in developed world
• Rising Internet usage and time online
• Does this change in information source herald a new knowledge gap of greater significance?
The New Technologies

- The great white hope of our time: the Internet (The World Wide Web)
- Different levels of access across the world
- Different levels of access within Ireland
- What is being sold?
- What is really on offer?
First world and non-runners
The Nouveau Riche and the New Poor
Ethical Implications
Social Justice in Technology